

Seasons of Change

The Highlights and Lowlights of the Sandilands Ski Club

Who would have thought, in 1991, when we first heard grumblings of Manitoba Conservations plans to cut back on grooming the ski trails in Sandilands that it would actually come to fruition. I know that when I was told by Jac Dikkema that I should start a ski club I laughed at him. It is difficult to believe that we formed a club and have had 24 years of history. 24 years with a great number of peaks and valleys.

Meager Beginnings

In March of 1992, the ski club was established with goals of keeping trails groomed and growth in numbers through education and events. In the fall of 1992, we hoped to attract skiers to the club by holding a mall display in the fall. We provided cross country ski education for youth and families through Jackrabbits. 2 club ski events were held, as well as the Iceman Limpet, Poker Derby, and Ski wind up.

By 1993 we were responsible for grooming of the trails. Conservation had cut a new trail for us, which became known as the Black trail and a new trail map was created. In the next 3 years 5 of our club members took the CANSI instructor program and we added ski clinics to the list of programs offered. The signs on the trails were in poor condition so we had the SRSS router 60 wood signs which volunteers from the Ski club painted and posted. Ken and Geralyn Reimer headed Jack Rabbits which had been running since 1988.

1994 was marked by the purchase of a new renovator/track setter, which was built by Pete Friesen and Peter Doerksen. Jack rabbits disbanded due to lack of public interest. The Club started grooming the Steinbach Fly in Golf course.

In 1995 with the passing of Leroy Thiessen, his wife sold his sport equipment and donated the proceeds of the sale went to the ski club. A Leroy Thiessen Memorial Fund was created. The money from the equipment sale and proceeds from a Leroy Thiessen Memorial Fund was enough to build the timber frame works for a semi- permanent warming hut. The club purchased a Quad track machine hoping that it would be an improvement over the 1996 and 1999 Alpine snow machines that Conservation had sold the club for \$1.00 when the club was established.

1997 Jac Dikkema organized the first Classic ski event and it was a great success.

1998 The Quad track was not the machine that the club had hoped for. It would have to be repaired and put up for sale.

Near Death to New Beginnings

2000 By the fall of 2000 every one from the executive had quit except the President. As president I created a "Do You Want to Ski Sandilands?" threat poster instead of my Annual newsletter. We had an

excellent turn out at the AGM and we started the ski season with 8 people on the executive and 4 ski club members willing to sit on the board. Manitoba Conservation allowed the club to change the semi-permanent warming hut into a permanent structure. The ply wood walls of this structure had been stolen twice in two years, once from the hut itself and once from our storage area.

By 2001 we realized that in order to remain viable, we needed replace our old snow machines and grooming equipment. In fall of 2001 we announced at the AGM our decision to embark an enormous Special Project that would allow the Club to purchase new grooming equipment. By the spring of 2002 the Club had sold the Quad track and raised enough funds to purchase a new Yamaha VK 540 snow machine and JACA grooming equipment that would properly renovate and groom the ski trails. The equipment included a snow grabber which would bring the snow in from the edges of the trail to create enough snow to track. There was enough money left over to send groomers Tony Fast and Glenn Friesen to Thunder Bay to learn to use the new equipment.

In 2002 the Club became recognized under the Cooperative Act. Grooming guidelines were established.

Spring of 2003 the first of a number of Landmark feeds/ Sandilands Ski Classics was held. 95 skiers attended deeming this event successful. Sandilands Ski Club was awarded a 6,500.00 grant from Sport Legacy to build a storage shed which was erected in fall of 2003.

In 2005 Manitoba Conservation announced that they would no longer clear trail parking lots or road to storage shed. Members of the Ski Club lobbied to have the parking lots cleared and later the lots were cleared by highways but the snow removal on road to the storage shed had to be contracted out.

In spring of 2006 Ken Reimer took over as coordinator of the Landmark Feeds/Sandilands Ski Classic. March 12, 2006 Equipment storage shed collapses under the weight of wet snow. Roof caves in on our Yamaha snow machine and wrecks the tunnel and wind shield deeming snow machine a MPIC write off. The Club took the money offered by MPIC and purchased the snow machine back as by back. Pete Friesen and Al Hiebert were able to straighten the tunnel and repair machine. Hanover doors covered cost of rebuild the storage shed this time adding extra reinforcement the building to ensure that the building was more stable. A Ski Club website was established and Neil Theissen volunteered to provide updates.

2007 Sept 03, 2007 ski club purchased new Yamaha VK 540 snow machine. Between the years 1993 and 2007 Peter Doerksen had painted a number of metal diamonds the colors of the trails and they had been added to the trail system. George Remillard spray painted corrugated plastic signs in the late 90's which we posted to replace missing signs. The Trail Head signs which had been up since long before the Ski Club took over grooming were in poor shape and needed to be replaced. Club embarked on a project to replace all signage to the trails including the 4 trail head signs. Phase one was completed in the 2007-2008 ski season. November 2007 a final agreement signed with Manitoba Conservation.

May 2008 Fire caused by ATVs at poker derby destroys 8500 acres of Sandilands forest including parts or all of 4 ski trails and one of our warming huts.

Fall 2008 Greg Penner brings the club further in the world of computer technology. A new section of green trail created. Clubs from all over lobby Government to have motorized vehicles banned on ski trails. Trails were GPSed, maps were updated.

Fall 2009 Tony Fast created two new trails to add to the system of trails. These trails are known as the Grey and Orange trails. Trail maps were revised. A new Warming hut was build to replace to hut destroyed by the fire with funding from CCSAM and Charleswood ski club. A plaque was made to recognize the volunteers for their time and money that made this project viable.

2010 A new yellow trail was added to the list of trails and maps were once again revised. You can see the beaches of Lake Agassie when skiing along the ridge. A new door was built for the new warming hut.

2011 Ski trails of the Steinbach Fly in golf course were GPSed and a trail map was created. Zone 4 was used for the first time for a ski classic in Sandilands. A short cut was created and groomed from parking lot on green yellow to grey trail. New Ski Club registration system was enforced by CCSAM. A biffy was built for the new warming hut and the hut was furnished with benches. Our new warming hut was finally finished and is a cozy place for skiers to gather in the winter. Pearl Wintoniw stepped down as caller for bingos. Ski club no longer works bingos for revenue.

2012 was a low snow season. Events and race were cancelled. The Ski Club Executive had thought of building a new warming hut, to celebrate 20 years since club was founded, but put this dream was put on hold. A second fire in Sandilands Provincial Forest affects part of blue trail. Club executive entertains the truth that to remain viable they will some year have to move the ski trails.

2013 In fall of 2012, a 2 foot dump of wet snow broke off hundreds of jack pine in the forest. Support to remove the broken trees by our club and Charleswood Ski club was fantastic and by first grooming all trails had been cleared and were groom. The club experiences tremendous ski season. Zone 4 Computer program is up and running. Registration for the Ski Club and Ski Classic can be done on line. Kinks have been ironed out of computerized timing at the Classic.

2014 Government cut backs and closure of the Marchand Wayside Park during the winter brought forth the decision eliminate the Sandilands Classic Event for the time being and channel our energy into establishing a Jackrabbits program. Jackrabbits, is a program that introduces younger families into skiing as a sport that can be enjoyed by the whole family. A new definition of braving the cold winter was introduced and 2014 was the coldest winter since 1898. Despite the cold 2014 was one of the longest ski seasons in years as we trails were packed in late November and we groomed until late March.

2015 A partnership was formed that is a win, win situation to both parties involved. Sandilands Ski Club grooms trails at Quarry Oaks golf course in exchange for having a warm building for Jackrabbits to gather. Ski Club purchased a 2015 Ski-Doo Skandic WT 550 snow machine.

Over the years the Sandilands Ski Club has gone through a number of peaks and valleys but the efforts of many faithful volunteers has kept the club viable and thriving.